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Reading Diodorus through Photius: The Case of the Sicilian Slave Revolts

Laura Pfuntner

THE TEXT of the second half of Diodorus Siculus' *Bibliotheca* (Books 21–40) is a composite of authorial and editorial interventions, beginning with its original composition in the first century B.C. Diodorus drew heavily on earlier historians—many of whose works are lost—for the content of these books, which narrate events across the *oikoumenê* from the early third century through the first half of the first century B.C.¹ In turn, the manuscripts containing complete texts of Books 21–40—probably small in number even in antiquity—have themselves been lost for nearly a millennium.² Editors have reconstituted these lost books from fragments preserved mainly in two Byzantine compilations, the *Bibliotheca* of Photius (hereafter referred to by its alternate title, the *Myriobiblos*, to prevent confusion with the work of Diodorus)

¹ The most prominent of these sources are Polybius (for 264–146 B.C., Books 28–32 of the *Bibliotheca*) and his continuator Posidonius (for 146–ca. 80 B.C., Books 33–37). However, the most recent editor of the fragments of Books 33–37 questions the assumption that Posidonius was the main source used by Diodorus: P. Goukowsky, *Diodore de Sicile. Bibliothèque historique. Fragments. Livres XXXIII–XL* (Paris 2014) 57–65.

² Manuscripts of Books 31–40 survived at least until the tenth century, when they served as a source of the *Excerpta historica* of Constantine VII, and probably through the twelfth century, since they are cited by John Tzetzes. Their loss may be related to the sack of Constantinople in 1204, though Constantine Lascaris alleged that a complete text of Diodorus still existed in Sicily in the sixteenth century. See F. Chamoux, P. Bertrac, and Y. Vernière, *Diodore de Sicile. Bibliothèque historique. Livre I* (Paris 1993) LXXVIII–CXLII, for the history of transmission of the text of the *Bibliotheca*.

and the *Excerpta historica* collected by Constantinopolitan scholars under Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus.³

For the historian of the Middle Republic, the fragments of Books 33–37 are a valuable supplement to the more complete narratives of, *inter alia*, Plutarch, Appian, and Sallust, because the fragments offer alternative perspectives on some of the events described by these authors and furnish information on other events that they do not discuss in detail. However, with a few exceptions,⁴ historians of the Republic have paid little attention to the history of transmission of the lost later books of Diodorus, and have given little study to how the process of fragmentation and reconstitution of these books over the past millennium has affected the reading and analysis of their contents.

This article focuses on events in Sicily for which Diodorus Siculus—as preserved in Photius’ *Myriobiblos* and the Constantinian *Excerpta*—is our only source of substantial length and detail: the slave uprisings of the 130s (described in Book 34) and of the late 100s (Book 36).⁵ Historians tend to take Diodorus’ fragmentary narrative of these events at face value, despite the difficulty of distinguishing true excerpts from summaries, of restoring the original chronological order of Diodorus’ text, and of filling narrative gaps between fragments.⁶

³ The first edition of the entirety of the *Bibliotheca*, edited by H. Estienne and published in 1559, included only *eklogai* from Photius; P. Wesseling’s 1745 edition was the first to include passages from the *Excerpta*. See Chamoux et al., *Diodore* CLIV–CLXII, for the editorial history of the *Bibliotheca*. P. Lemerle, *Byzantine Humanism: The First Phase* (Canberra 1986) 219, notes that the name *Bibliotheca* was not applied to Photius’ work before the sixteenth century, whereas *Myriobiblos* appears in the fourteenth century; cf. A. Diller, “Photius’ ‘Bibliotheca’ in Byzantine Literature,” *DOP* 16 (1962) 389–396, at 392–396.

⁴ E.g. J.-Ch. Dumont, *Servus. Rome et l’esclavage sous la République* (Rome 1987) 201–203.

⁵ Other ancient authors, including Cicero, Strabo, Florus, and Orosius, mention these events only briefly: cf. Goukowsky, *Diodore* 46–59, 138–143.

⁶ An illustration of the challenging nature of the Diodoran text is the

The events of the second slave revolt recounted in Book 36 are especially challenging to reconstruct because we rely almost solely on the narrative preserved by Photius. This challenge, however, should be embraced rather than bemoaned, since the *Myriobiblos* itself is a fascinating artifact of Byzantine literary culture that provides valuable insight into the interpretation of the Greco-Roman past in ninth-century Constantinople.

For this reason, this article not only evaluates the extent to which Photius faithfully reproduces Diodorus' original text, but also considers what Photius' own interests in the text are likely to have been, and how these interests affected his methods of composition.⁷ Section I summarizes Photius' treatment of Sicilian history in his long codex on Books 31–40 of Diodorus and elsewhere in the *Myriobiblos*, and explores how Photius' interest in the Sicilian sections of Diodorus' text may be linked to events in Sicily in his own day. Section II focuses on Photius' reconstruction of Diodorus' narrative of the slave revolts, and examines the extent to which the text of Photius is representative of Diodorus' original work—in terms of length, syntax, and style—by comparing it with the Constantinian *Excerpta* from Books 31–40. The underlying argument of this article is that there is value in considering the fragmentary books of Diodorus' *Bibliotheca* as artifacts of Byzantine reading culture, and as evidence of the outlook of Photius and other ninth- and tenth-century readers, especially concerning the place of Sicily in 'Roman' imperial history.

convention of compiling fragments from Books 34 and 35 together, since editors have been unsure of the precise location of the caesura between the two books. I follow Goukowsky, who in his recent edition places all the fragments on the first Sicilian slave war in Book 34.

⁷ I use the following editions: R. Henry, *Photius. Bibliothèque I–IX* (Paris 1959–1991); U. Ph. Boissevain, C. de Boor, and Th. Büttner-Wobst, *Excerpta historica iussu Imp. Constantini Porphyrogeniti I–IV* (Berlin 1903–1910); and F. S. Walton, *Diodorus Siculus XII Books 33–40* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1967), with select corresponding fragments in Goukowsky, *Diodore*, noted below in the Appendix.

I. Photius and the Roman History of Sicily

Codex 244 on Diodorus Siculus is the longest set of excerpts from an ancient work of history in the *Myriobiblos*.⁸ This codex covers only the last decade (Books 31–40) of the *Bibliotheca*, but it is clear from codex 70, a summary of Diodorus' life and works, that Photius had read the entire work.⁹ Although the codex includes Diodoran morsels on several subjects—e.g. hermaphrodites, the history of the Jews, and a selection of events from Hellenistic and Roman Republican history—the largest part is taken up by the accounts of the two slave revolts in Sicily in the second century B.C.¹⁰ These events occupy all or part of fourteen of the codex's 34 Bekker columns, and they are its largest sections of continuous narrative. They also appear to represent Photius' main interest in the books of the *Bibliotheca* from which they were excerpted, to the exclusion of other second-century events. The passages from Books 34 and 36 preserved in the Constantinian *Excerpta* give a sense of the wide range of events that Photius omitted from his selection, such as the rise and fall of the Gracchi, the Jugurthine War, and various wars and dynastic conflicts in the Hellenistic East.¹¹

Though Diodorus' treatment of the Sicilian slave revolts forms the core of codex 244, it is difficult to discern from the other codices of the *Myriobiblos* whether Photius had a broader

⁸ W. T. Treadgold, *The Nature of the Bibliotheca of Photius* (Washington 1980) 90.

⁹ Photius also cites Diodorus in codex 60 for biographical information on Herodotus. Since it seems that the manuscripts of the *Bibliotheca* were copied and circulated by pentad or decade in Byzantine Constantinople, perhaps Photius had only the last decade of the work at hand when he composed codex 244. Cf. Chamoux et al., *Diodore* LXVIII, for the separate manuscript traditions of Books 1–5 and 11–20 of Diodorus.

¹⁰ Diodorus *Bibl.* 34.2.1–23 and 36.1–2, 3–9.1, 10 = Photius *Myriobiblos* cod. 244, 384a 32–390b35.

¹¹ For other events recounted in Books 34 and 36 see P. Botteri, *Les fragments de l'histoire des Gracques dans la Bibliothèque de Diodore de Sicile* (Geneva 1992) and Goukowsky, *Diodore*.

interest in Sicilian affairs. He does not appear to have had a strong interest in other events of the middle Roman Republic in which Sicily played a key role, such as the First and Second Punic Wars. He includes works that touch on this period (*inter alia*, the histories of Appian and the biographies of Plutarch), but he makes no mention of the main account of Rome's wars of imperial expansion, Polybius' *Histories*, even though most of this work survived into the tenth century. The other codices of the *Myriobiblos* contain only brief references to Sicilian geography, mythology, and history, reinforcing the impression that it was particularly the slave revolts of the second century B.C.—as described by Diodorus—that captured Photius' attention.¹²

As some scholars have noted in passing,¹³ Photius' particular interest in Diodorus' accounts of the slave revolts in Sicily may be related to the progressive Arab conquest of the island in his own day. Many of the key events in Photius' life—including the composition of the *Myriobiblos*—are impossible to date with certainty, and so we can do no more than hypothesize on their connection with events in Sicily.¹⁴ Nonetheless, given our reliance on excerpts from the *Myriobiblos* for the history of the Roman-era slave revolts, Photius' interest in Sicily is worth exploring in greater detail in order to determine what he may have known of recent events on the island, and how they may have colored his reading of Diodorus' text.

The Byzantine Empire's grip on Sicily had begun to loosen during Photius' youth,¹⁵ beginning in 827, when the fleet and

¹² Cf. the "Index des noms géographiques" in Henry, *Photius* IX 279–367.

¹³ E.g. D. Mendels, "Greek and Roman History in the *Bibliotheca* of Photius – A Note," *Byzantion* 56 (1986) 196–206, at 204, and T. Urbainczyk, *Slave Revolts in Antiquity* (Berkeley 2008) 84.

¹⁴ W. Treadgold, "Photius Before His Patriarchate," *JEH* 53 (2002) 1–17, attempts to reconstruct Photius' early years. He speculates that Photius did the extensive reading that would form the basis of *Myriobiblos* as a young man during his years in exile with his father (833–842).

¹⁵ Treadgold, *JEH* 53 (2002) 1–17, hypothesizes that Photius was born in 813. A date in the first two decades of the ninth century is probable.

army that the rebellious naval commander Euphemius had solicited from the Aghlabid emir of Ifriqiya landed at the western port of Mazara. The island remained a locus of conflict throughout Photius' lifetime and well after his death, until the fall of the last Byzantine stronghold at Taormina in 962.¹⁶ As Arab forces slowly but persistently progressed eastward across Sicily,¹⁷ events on the island had a tangible impact on the religious and cultural life of the imperial capital. Apocalyptic texts such as the numerous 'Visions of Daniel' that were written in Sicily during the Arab invasions circulated back to Constantinople, along with lay and clerical refugees from the conflict.¹⁸

Photius, as a politically active and well-connected member of the Constantinopolitan elite, would have been better informed of events in Sicily than most in the capital. As his career in the imperial service progressed after his return from exile in 842, he established alliances with powerful Sicilian churchmen, such as Gregory Asbestos, a protégé of the Syracuse-born patriarch Methodius (843–847) who himself became archbishop of Syra-

¹⁶ Taormina had first previously fallen to the Arabs in 902, about a decade after Photius' death, only to be regained by Byzantine forces a decade later. See recently L. Chiarelli, *A History of Muslim Sicily* (Santa Venera 2011) 13–65, on the Arab conquest of Sicily. A. A. Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes* I–II (Brussels 1935–1968), also remains fundamental.

¹⁷ Despite the initial success of the forces that the emperor Michael II sent to Sicily in 828, Palermo fell in 831, during the joint campaign of forces from Africa and Spain that had begun the previous year. Several settlements and strongholds in the western and central interior of Sicily submitted to the Arabs in the next decade. Cities in the east followed in the 840s, including Messina (843), Modica (845), Leontini, and Ragusa.

¹⁸ Refugees included the *spatharius* Symeon and the bishop Luke, who fled Palermo after its fall to the Arabs and returned to Constantinople (Vasiliev, *Byzance* I 129). Peter of Sicily, who was sent on an embassy to the Paulicians early in Basil I's reign, had also fled to the imperial capital during the Arab conquest (Vasiliev II 28). See P. J. Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (Berkeley 1985), for apocalyptic literature originating in Sicily and/or responding to the revolt of Euphemius and the Arab invasions.

cuse. Gregory played a significant role in Photius' rise to the patriarchate, ordaining him as a priest just before his consecration in 858.¹⁹ The years that Photius served as patriarch witnessed a series of devastating setbacks for Byzantine forces in Sicily, including the fall of Cefalù and Enna, followed by Noto, Scicli, and Troina. Only a few major Sicilian cities—including Syracuse, Catania, and Taormina—remained in Byzantine hands at the time of Photius' deposition early in the reign of Basil I (867).

In addition, Sicily's broader strategic importance to the Byzantine Empire played an indirect but significant role in Photius' eventful career as patriarch. Conflict with the Latin West was the defining feature of Photius' first patriarchate, in the form of the jurisdictional and doctrinal disputes with Pope Nicholas I that led to the 'Photian schism'.²⁰ However, the growing existential threat that the Arabs posed to Byzantine Sicily, which was emphasized by the sack of Syracuse and the massacre of its population after a nine-month siege in 878, pressed home the need for greater cooperation between Byzantium and the Christian powers of the central and western Mediterranean. Photius' reconciliation with Rome, in the winter of 879/8, early in his second patriarchate may have helped to pave the way for the western campaigns of the final seven years of Basil's reign (879–886), in which the emperor's generals reconquered significant parts of Apulia, Calabria, and Lucania.

Furthermore, as Photius read Books 34 and 36 of Diodorus Siculus, he may have recognized similarities between the situations of 'Roman' Sicily in the Middle Republic and in his own day that spurred him to include the narratives of the slave revolts in the *Myriobiblos*. Although the surviving Byzantine chronicles say little about the Arab conquest of Sicily itself, there are a number of potential points of contact between their

¹⁹ Treadgold, *JEH* 53 (2002) 14.

²⁰ See M. McCormick, "Western Approaches (700–900)," in *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire* (Cambridge 2008) 395–432, at 420–422, for a summary of Photius' relations with the western church.

accounts of the initial revolt of Euphemius in the 820s and Diodorus' account of the slave revolts of the second century B.C. The immediate cause both of the second slave revolt of 104–100 and of Euphemius' revolt seems to be anger over the actions of imperial authorities: the praetor P. Licinius Nerva's cancellation of the senate's policy of freeing slaves who had been illegally captured from Roman allies (36.3), and the emperor Michael II's order for the arrest of Euphemius.²¹ This disgruntlement could grow into armed revolt in both cases because the attention of the imperial center was turned elsewhere: in the late second century B.C., to wars with the Cimbri in northern Italy (36.1), and in the 820s, to the revolt of Thomas the Slav in the eastern Byzantine realm. However, the romantic motives ascribed to Euphemius by Byzantine sources²²—the claim that he fell in love with a nun, causing the young woman's brothers to complain to the emperor—echo those ascribed to Titus Vettius, who instigated a revolt of his slaves in Italy in order to punish his creditors after he was unable to purchase the slave woman he loved (36.2.2–6).

The adoption of regal trappings by rebel leaders is another common feature of the accounts of the slave revolts and Euphemius' revolt. Photius preserves passages from Diodorus that describe the regal titles and regalia that Eunus adopted during the first slave revolt (34.2.8–9, 14, 24) and that Vettius (36.2.3–4), Salvius (36.4.4, 7.1–4), and Athenion (36.5.2–3) took up in the second revolt. Byzantine and Arab sources emphasize that one of the conditions upon which Euphemius secured help from the African emir was that Euphemius would be proclaimed emperor of Sicily, but pay tribute to the Aghlabids. These sources also ascribe his downfall to his regal pretensions,

²¹ See Chiarelli, *History* 20–23, for the alleged and actual causes of the revolt of Euphemius.

²² E.g. John Skylitzes' chronicle of the reign of Michael II: J. Wortley, *John Skylitzes: A Synopsis of Byzantine History, 811–1057* (Cambridge 2010) 48–49.

as he was murdered in Enna or Syracuse by locals pretending to pay him homage.²³

The key locations and strategies of the slave revolts of the second century B.C. and the Arab conquest of the ninth century A.D. were also similar. Although the details of the Sicilian campaigns of the ninth century are known today only through Arab sources, they were probably known to Photius through both official and unofficial channels, including dispatches from Byzantine commanders on the island, letters from clergymen based in Sicily,²⁴ and the reports of refugees who had fled to Constantinople. Both the second-century B.C. and the ninth-century A.D. military campaigns were dominated by siege warfare, especially of fortified citadels in the mountainous Sicilian interior. The most notable of these citadels was Enna, an ancient settlement on a summit 931 meters above sea level in the center of the island. The first slave revolt had started in Enna with the murder of Damophilus (34.2.10–15) and ended when the proconsul P. Rupilius captured the city after a long siege (34.2.21); in the intervening three years, the city had served as the home base of the slave king Eunus and his followers. More than nine centuries later, the Byzantine stronghold at Enna was a key strategic location in Euphemius' revolt and in the subsequent Arab conquest of the island, and it was targeted in semi-annual Arab campaigns from the 820s until its fall early in 859.²⁵ In another echo of Diodorus' account, in which Enna fell to Rupilius because of the treachery of a single slave (34.2.21), the Arabs were only able to take the fortress with the help of a perfidious Greek prisoner.²⁶

²³ See Vasiliev, *Byzance* I 83–84, for Arab and Byzantine stories of the downfall of Euphemius, which differ in several details (including the location of the assassination and the manner in which it was carried out).

²⁴ Such as the famous letter of Theodosius the Monk on the fall of Syracuse on 21 May 878 (Vasiliev, *Byzance* II 75–78).

²⁵ Vasiliev, *Byzance* I 83–221.

²⁶ Vasiliev, *Byzance* I 220; Chiarelli, *History* 39.

II. *Reading Diodorus Siculus through Photius*

Photius gave special emphasis to Diodorus' account of the Sicilian slave revolts of the second century B.C. as he compiled the *Myriobiblos* probably because Diodorus' narrative resonated with his knowledge of the political situation in Sicily in his own day. Nonetheless, the main Diodoran codex of the *Myriobiblos* poses many challenges to historians wishing to understand the causes and course of the two Sicilian slave revolts, as well as other events chronicled in the lost final decade of the *Bibliotheca*.

One difficulty is that Photius did not adhere strictly to the order of books in the *Bibliotheca* in arranging codex 244. The narratives of the slave revolts from Books 34 and 36 (384a32–390b35) fall between extracts from Books 33 (383b38–384a30) and 37 (391a30–392b32), but several pages after Photius' first extract from Book 34 (379a34–379b38). Instead, he arranged the passages from the *Bibliotheca* in loose chronological and thematic order, sometimes grouping together passages that treated similar themes even if they did not appear in consecutive books. The set of passages immediately before the excerpts on the Sicilian slave revolts, though they are drawn apparently randomly from Books 38, 31, 32, and 33, evidence Photius' interest in unusual events—such as the bizarre deaths of Q. Lutatius Catulus and Perseus of Macedon—and exemplary individuals, including Perseus, L. Aemilius Paulus, Viriathus, Nicomedes of Bithynia, and Masinissa.²⁷ Photius' emphasis on historical exemplars—especially non-Roman and negative ones—continues in his passages on the slave revolts, in which he gives as much space (if not more) to the personalities of the rebel leaders as to the events of the revolts themselves.²⁸

Another vexed question that influences the reading of Dio-

²⁷ *Myriobiblos* 381a9–384a30. Walton assigns Photius' final excerpts from Book 32 (383b38–384a30) to the beginning of Book 33. Photius' interest in unusual human phenomena is evidenced early in the Diodoran codex, in the long passage concerning hermaphrodites (377a34–379a30).

²⁸ E.g. the long passage on the background and alleged charlatanism of Eunus (384b14–385a7).

dorus through Photius is whether the passages in codex 244 are more appropriately interpreted as excerpts taken directly from the text of Diodorus with little or no alteration, or as summaries that Photius edited for style and length. Since the original text of Diodorus is lost, the main way to assess Photius' fidelity is to compare passages from the same contexts that are preserved in the *Excerpta*. The *Excerpta*—thematic compilations of passages from historical works, commissioned by Constantine VII in the 940s or 950s and assembled by a “cutting and pasting team” of anonymous scholars over several decades—are generally understood to be accurate copies of the original texts, devoid of significant editorial interventions, apart from the initial and significant act of cutting up continuous narratives into smaller segments of text.²⁹

Unfortunately, the *Excerpta*'s coverage of Diodorus overlaps with that of Photius in only a few places.³⁰ In fact, the first Sicilian slave revolt and the buildup to the second revolt are the only events covered extensively in both the *Excerpta* and the *Myriobiblos*, and so they are the only instance in which scholars can compare the two avenues of preservation of Diodorus' text at length.³¹ In such comparisons, Photius usually gets relatively high marks for textual accuracy: his editorial interventions are limited to occasional, minor alterations to Diodorus' word choice and syntax.³² However, because of his succinctness, he

²⁹ For the goals and methodology of the *Excerpta* project see P. Magdalino, “Byzantine Encyclopaedism of the Ninth and Tenth Centuries,” in J. König and G. Woolf (eds.), *Encyclopaedism from Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Cambridge 2013) 219–231, quoted at 227; A. Németh, “The Imperial Systematisation of the Past in Constantinople: Constantine VII and his *Historical Excerpts*,” in *Encyclopaedism* 232–258; and B. Flusin, “Les *Excerpta* constantiniens: logique d'une anti-histoire,” in S. Pittia (ed.), *Fragments d'historiens grecs: Autour de Denys d'Halicarnasse* (Rome 2002) 537–559.

³⁰ E.g. at 31.9 (*Myriobiblos* 381b24–382a22; *De sententiis* no. 359 and *De virtutibus et vitiis* no. 277) and 31.19 (*Myriobiblos* 382a22–383a26; *De insidiis* no. 30).

³¹ See the concordance in Dumont, *Servus* 201.

³² See Goukowsky's chart (*Diodore* 139) for examples from Book 36.

gets low marks for fidelity to the spirit of the original Diodoran text. Goukowsky, for example, criticizes Photius' failure to transmit precise details of the military operations of the first slave revolt, such as Rupilius' siege of Tauromenium.³³ Furthermore, Dumont alleges that such omissions are not "neutral" since they emphasize certain aspects of the Diodoran text, such as the charlatanism of Eunus, at the expense of other details, making Diodorus' presumably more rounded perspective on the events and personalities of the slave revolts difficult to recover.³⁴

However, a point not often made in these comparisons is that without recourse to the narrative structure that Photius provides in the *Myriobiblos*, it would be extremely difficult to recover the events of the Sicilian slave revolts from the *Excerpta* alone. Each volume of the *Excerpta* has the character of a collection of snippets arranged, without comment, in the order in which they appeared in the original text. Since they lack commentary, or any transitional interpolations between excerpts, the *Excerpta* possess no authorial voice.³⁵ The excerptors focus exclusively on passages related to their assigned theme—the five surviving volumes contain excerpts on gnomic statements (*De sententiis*), virtues and vices (*De virtutibus et vitiis*), ambushes (*De insidiis*), and embassies to and from the Romans (*De legationibus*)—and often omit the narrative context of these passages. For example, a passage on the ἀναρχία in Sicilian communities during the second slave revolt that is preserved in the Diodoran rubric of *De virtutibus et vitiis* (no. 353 = 36.11) is barely distinguishable from passages in Book 34 that address the civil disorder in Sicily that resulted from the first slave rebellion (e.g. 34.2.48 = *De sententiis* no. 405). The passage in *De*

³³ *Diodore* 51–52.

³⁴ *Servus* 202: "la version de Photius ... n'est malheureusement pas neutre."

³⁵ Though Flusin, in *Fragments* 537–559, sees a historical logic in the order of the volumes of the *Excerpta* and in the order of authors within each volume.

virtutibus et vitiis lacks reference to names, dates, places, or other contextual information; only its placement among other excerpts related to events of the last decade of the second century B.C. suggests that it describes social conditions in Sicily during the second slave revolt.³⁶

For the first slave revolt in particular, the easiest way for modern editors of Diodorus—and for the ancient historians who rely on their work—to assemble the snippets from the various volumes of the *Excerpta* in chronological order is to use the passages from Photius as a narrative framework: in Walton's Loeb edition, for example, passages from the *Myriobiblos* (34.2.1–24) are followed by comparable passages assembled from the *Excerpta* (34.2.24b and 25–48).³⁷ In this way, the *Excerpta* passages can be reconstituted into an account of the first Sicilian revolt that is parallel to that of Photius.³⁸ Although the Diodoran narrative reconstructed from the *Excerpta*—especially in Walton's edition—appears to provide a relatively coherent account of the first slave revolt to place alongside Photius' succinct passages, it is important to remember that only a small portion of the original *Excerpta* has survived. From the known titles of 26 of the 53 original collections, we can assume that many of Diodorus' descriptions of events in the two Sicilian slave revolts would have found a home in now-lost volumes,

³⁶ *De virtutibus et vitiis* no. 352 = 35.38.1 (on the rift between Marius and Metellus Numidicus); no. 354 = 36.12 (on the tribune L. Appuleius Saturninus); no. 355 = 36.16 (on the exile of Metellus Numidicus).

³⁷ Walton reassembles the Diodoran *Excerpta* on the first slave revolt in this order: *De insidiis* no. 44 = 34.2.24b; *De virtutibus et vitiis* no. 325–327 = 34.2.25–32; *De sententiis* no. 396 = 34.2.33; *De virtutibus et vitiis* no. 328–329 = 34.2.34–37; *De sententiis* no. 397 = 34.2.38; *De virtutibus et vitiis* no. 330 = 34.2.39; *De sententiis* no. 398–399 = 34.2.40a and 40b; *De virtutibus et vitiis* no. 331 = 34.2.41; *De sententiis* no. 400 = 34.2.42; *De virtutibus et vitiis* no. 332 = 34.2.43; *De sententiis* no. 401–405 = 34.2.44–48.

³⁸ In his recent edition, Goukowsky (84–108, 158–173; cf. the Appendix below) takes a different approach. He categorizes most of the Photian text as *testimonium* and places it before the relevant text from the *Excerpta*, which he classifies as *fragmenta*.

such as the dozen or so collections of excerpts on military and diplomatic themes.³⁹ If even a few of the lost volumes of the *Excerpta* survived, modern editions of the last decade of Diodorus (and especially of Books 33–40) would undoubtedly be more chronologically coherent and richer in narrative texture.

The poor survival rate of the *Excerpta* volumes also probably accounts for the dearth of excerpts related to the second Sicilian slave revolt. Therefore, a particularly important question for historians of this revolt is the proportion of the original text of Book 36 that Photius chose to include in codex 244 of the *Myriobiblos*. Unfortunately, comparisons with the lengths of the surviving books of Diodorus, and with the lengths of the excerpts from Books 31–40 preserved in the surviving *Excerpta* volumes, do not give grounds for optimism: Dumont, for example, estimates that Photius preserved only 10–25% of the content of Book 36.⁴⁰ Although the precise amount of content missing from Book 36—as well as from Book 34—as it is now reconstructed is educated guesswork, historians must nonetheless bear in mind that, despite the best efforts of editors to build a coherent narrative from the fragments in the *Excerpta* and the *Myriobiblos*, no complete account of either slave revolt is possible. We probably lack as many (if not more) details on the key events and personalities of these revolts as we possess.

Although Photius' treatment of Books 34 and 36 is undoubtedly selective, and though it is clear that he omitted much more content than he included, for historians of the slave revolts he does offer a reading experience unique and in some respects preferable to that of Diodorus' original text. Photius does not preserve Diodorus' annalistic format, omitting the consular years in which the events of the slave revolts took

³⁹ Németh, in *Encyclopaedism* 248–253; Flusin, in *Encyclopaedism* 554–555. Besides the surviving collections *De legationibus* and *De insidiis*, military-themed titles include “on the command of the army,” “on victory,” “on defeat,” “on the transformation of defeat into victory,” “on battles,” “on conflicts,” “on public speeches,” and (probably) “on sieges of various towns.”

⁴⁰ *Servus* 202.

place—and in some cases, creating a confusing impression of sequentiality for events that actually occurred simultaneously⁴¹—as well as the non-Sicilian events of those years. However, his preference for a thematic ordering of events yields a more monographic, ‘Sallustian’ treatment of the slave wars than Diodorus originally provided, without the switching of scenes and the bouncing back and forth between locations in the original text.⁴² In other words, Photius assembled passages from disparate places in Books 34 and 36 in order to create the history of the slave revolts that Diodorus himself never wrote.

Conclusion

Reading the *Myriobiblos* as an ancient historian can be frustrating: Photius is highly selective and idiosyncratic in his choice of material, and his methods of composition are obscure. Historians of antiquity must also be aware of the implications of differentiating the *summaries* or *epitomes* of Photius from the *fragments* or *excerpts* preserved in the *Excerpta*, such as the difficulty of distinguishing the precise words of Diodorus—and of his source(s)—from the editorial interventions of his excerptors. However, I hope to have shown that the authorial voice of Photius himself is worthy of attention: a voice that has been obscured by modern efforts to disassemble and recompile the scarce surviving passages of Diodorus’ text back into their ‘proper’ order. The codex that Photius shaped out of diverse and disparate passages from the last decade of Diodorus’ *Bibliotheca* has its own peculiar logic, reflecting the diverse reading in-

⁴¹ Such as the revolts of Salvius in the east and Athenion in the west (388b14–389a36 = 36.4–5).

⁴² The first quarter of Book 20—the latest book of the *Bibliotheca* to survive in its entirety—may serve as an example of Diodorus’ organizational principles: although Agathocles of Syracuse is the dominant figure of this and of the preceding book, the action jumps from his campaigns in the central Mediterranean (3–18) to events in the Aegean and the eastern Mediterranean (19–26.3), then to Rome (26.3–4), and back to the Aegean and the eastern Mediterranean (27–28), before returning to central Mediterranean affairs (29–36).

terests of its compiler; it is more than just a set of reading notes assembled carelessly and in haste.

Photius' treatment of Diodorus' narrative of the Sicilian slave revolts also provides insight into the geopolitical outlook of a highly educated and influential Byzantine reader of the mid-ninth century, especially regarding a region of the central Mediterranean that was key to the imperial ambitions of both the new and the old Rome. Even in the decades after Photius' lifetime, as Byzantium's territorial holdings in Sicily shrank to a tenuous toehold, the island retained its strategic importance. Its reconquest remained a goal of Byzantine emperors as late as 1038, when Michael IV's general George Maniakes led a large expeditionary force that retook several Sicilian cities from the Arabs before it was forced to withdraw to deal with revolts in southern Italy.⁴³ The apocalyptic texts composed in Sicily that circulated across the Byzantine Empire—including to Constantinople itself, where they were read and revised at least through the 960s, years after the actual Byzantine presence on the island was extinguished—testify both to the anxiety felt in Sicily and in the capital at the progressive erosion of Byzantine control, and to the continued hope that the island might be recovered by the Romans of the East.⁴⁴ It is unlikely that Photius was unmindful of such hopes and fears when he read Diodorus' account of another difficult period in Sicily's Roman history and sought to preserve it for his brother Tarasius and other readers in his circle.⁴⁵

⁴³ Chiarelli, *History* 126.

⁴⁴ In 968, Liudprand, bishop of Cremona, recorded his impressions of a compilation of Sicilian and Eastern 'Visions of Daniel' that he had seen on a visit to Constantinople earlier in the decade (Alexander, *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* 96–122). The anxiety felt in the imperial center over the loss of Sicily is also encapsulated in the two (now lost) poems that the emperor Leo VI wrote about the fall of Syracuse (Vasiliev, *Byzance* II 78).

⁴⁵ I thank Ralph Hexter for reading an early version of this paper, and the editorial board and anonymous referee for their comments and corrections.

APPENDIX: Concordance of Photian Fragments of
Diodorus Siculus, Books 34 and 36

Book 34

Walton	Goukowsky
1	fr.36a, <i>Testimonium</i> , fr.36b (pp.105–107)
2.1–23	<i>Testimonium</i> (pp.83–89)
2.24	fr.13 (p.96)

Book 36

Walton	Goukowsky
1–2	<i>Testimonium, pars Ia and Ib</i> (pp.158–160)
3–6	<i>Testimonium, pars II</i> (pp.161–165)
7–9.1	<i>Testimonium, pars III</i> (pp.166–168)
10	<i>Testimonium, pars IV</i> (pp.169–170)
13	fr.4 (pp.170–171)
14	fr.6 (p.171)

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